IN THE CLAIMS:

Please amend the claims as follows:

1. (Currently Amended) A method for tracking the status of an annotation, comprising:

creating an annotation record comprising one or more fields for storing annotation data comprising the annotation;

retrieving annotation data stored in the annotation record; [[and]]

applying a set of state rules to determine a first state of the annotation based on the annotation data; and

receiving additional annotation data;

updating the annotation record with the additional annotation data; and

applying the set of state rules to determine a second state of the annotation based on the annotation data in the updated annotation record;

providing an indication that the state of the annotation has changed from the first state to the second state.

2. (Cancelled) The method of claim 1, further comprising:

receiving additional annotation data;

updating the annotation record with the additional annotation data; and

applying the set of state rules to determine a second state of the annotation based on the annotation data in the updated annotation record.

3. (Cancelled) The method of claim 2, further comprising providing an indication that the state of the annotation has changed from the first state to the second state.

4. (Currently Amended) The method of claim [[3]]1, wherein providing the indication that the state of the annotation has changed comprises notifying an entity.

5. (Original) The method of claim 4, wherein notifying the entity comprises notifying an entity responsible for providing annotation data required to change the state of the annotation from the second state to a third state.

6. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein:

the annotation record is associated with a particular annotation type; and

the method further comprises retrieving the state rules based on a type of the annotation.

7. (Original) The method of claim 6, wherein the method further comprises:

generating an interface screen based on an annotation structure associated with the annotation type, wherein the annotation structure identifies the one or more fields; and

receiving annotation data via the interface.

8. (Original) The method of claim 1, wherein the annotation record comprises a field indicating the current state of the annotation.

9. (Original) The method of claim 1, further comprising initiating a process in response to detecting a change in the annotation state.

10. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the process examines a number of annotations in the same annotation state.

11. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the process modifies the annotation data.

12. (Original) The method of claim 9, wherein the process initiates another process.

13. (Original) A method for managing annotations having multiple states, comprising:

defining a plurality of annotation types, each annotation type having one or more associated fields;

defining a set of state rules for each annotation type, wherein each state rule identifies an annotation state based on annotation data in the one or more fields associated with its corresponding annotation type; and

providing a state machine capable of retrieving annotation data for an annotation of one of the defined annotation types, applying the state rules for that type to the annotation data to determine the state of the annotation, and providing an indication of the annotation state.

14. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein at least one of the state rules for at least one of the annotation types identifies a state based on the presence or absence of data in at least one of the fields associated with that annotation type.

15. (Original) The method of claim 14, wherein at least one of the state rules for at least one of the annotation types identifies a state based on the presence or absence of data in at least two of the fields associated with that type.

16. (Original) The method of claim 13, wherein at least one of the state rules for at least one of the annotation types identifies a state based on a specified string of text in one of the fields associated with that type.

17. (Original) The method of claim 13, further comprising:

providing annotation structures for each annotation type, wherein each annotation structure identifies the one or more fields for a corresponding annotation type; and

generating annotation forms, based on the annotation structures, for receiving annotation data for each annotation type.

18. (Original) A method for gathering information about a plurality of processes of a similar process type, comprising:

providing an annotation form for receiving annotation data in a plurality of fields related to the processes;

storing annotation data received via the annotation form in a plurality of annotation records, wherein each annotation record relates to one of the similar type processes;

providing a set of state rules defining a plurality of states for the annotation based on the annotation data in each record;

applying the state rules to the annotation data in each record to determine the state of each annotation; and

generating a report indicating the state of each annotation.

19. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein each annotation record comprises a field for storing the current state of the corresponding annotation.

20. (Original) The method of claim 18, wherein at least one of the state rules defines an annotation state based on presence or absence of data in one of the fields.

21. (Currently Amended) A computer-readable medium containing a program for managing annotations having multiple states which, when executed by a processor, performs operations comprising:

creating an annotation record comprising one or more fields for storing annotation data;

retrieving annotation data stored in the annotation record; [[and]]

applying a set of state rules to determine a first state of the annotation based on the annotation data;

providing an indication of the first state of the annotation in an interface screen displaying the annotation data;

receiving additional annotation data;

updating the annotation record with the additional annotation data;

applying the set of state rules to determine a second state of the annotation based on the annotation data in the updated annotation record; and

providing an indication of the second state of the annotation in an interface screen displaying the annotation data.

22. (Cancelled) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, wherein the operations further comprise providing an indication of the first state of the annotation in an interface screen displaying the annotation data.

23. (Cancelled) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, wherein the operations further comprise

receiving additional annotation data;

updating the annotation record with the additional annotation data; and

applying the set of state rules to determine a second state of the annotation based on the annotation data in the updated annotation record.

24. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 21, further comprising notifying an entity of the state of the annotation.

25. (Original) The computer-readable medium of claim 24, wherein the entity is responsible for providing annotation data required to change the state of the annotation.

26. (Original) An annotation system, comprising:

one or more annotation structures, each identifying one or more annotation fields associated with an annotation type;

an annotation store for storing annotation records, each having fields associated with one of the annotation types;

a set of state rules for each annotation type, wherein each set of state rules defines a plurality of states for each associated annotation type based on the annotation data in the one or more associated fields; and

a state machine configured to access an annotation record and apply the set of state rules for the corresponding annotation type to determine an annotation state based on the date stored therein.

27. (Original) The annotation system of claim 26, wherein the system further comprises an executable component for communicating a determined annotation state to an entity.

28. (Original) The annotation system of claim 27, wherein the executable component retrieves the annotation state as a field in an annotation record.

29. (Original) The annotation system of claim 27, wherein the executable component retrieves the annotation state from the state machine.

30. (Original) The annotation system of claim 26, wherein at least one of the state rules associated with one of the annotation types defines an annotation state based on the presence or absence of data in at least one of the associated fields.

31. (Original) The annotation system of claim 26, wherein at least one of the state rules associated with one of the annotation types defines an annotation state based on the presence or absence of a text string in at least one of the associated fields.